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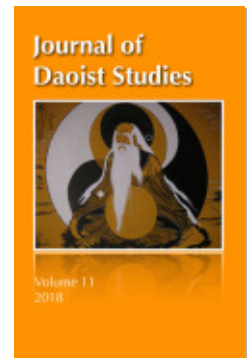
## Daoist Seals, Part 2: Classifying Different Types

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# Daoist Seals

## Part 2: Classifying Different Types

SHIH-SHAN SUSAN HUANG <sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

This second part of the study of Daoist seals focuses on types, building on Wang Yucheng's earlier studies. They come in four: 1) seal script; 2) heavenly scripts; 3) talisman-inspired; and 4) graphic. The underlining criterion is the Daoist strategy of image-making: it sheds light on the interlocking relationship of Daoist texts and images. The first type is purely script-based, while the fourth is purely graphic. Between the two is the core zone of Daoist visual culture as it blends image with text.

The first Daoist seal typology goes back to Wang Yucheng 王育成, who reproduced over 260 seals mainly from the Daoist Canon—Song and post-Song, some Tang—and created a comprehensive index of titles and references (2000, 58-75; 2001, 472-93). He divided them into four types: 1) seal script style (*zhuanshu shi* 篆書式); 2) talismanic seal script style (*fuzhuan shi* 符篆式); 3) seal imitating a talisman (*daofu shi* 道符式); 4) and talismanic graphic style (*futushi* 符圖式) (2000, 54-55; 2001, 470-71; cf. Li 2003b, 78).

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Chen Yun-ru, He Yan-chiuan, Fang Ling-guang, Chen Chien-chih, Hsu Ya-hwei, Hsieh Shu-wei, Sakai Norifumi, and Ma Xiaolin for their input. I also thank Jesse Green, who edited this article at its early stage.

While these types are useful, they also beg for further clarification. First, Wang does not sort out the seal specimens he reproduces according to his types; rather, he lays out numbered seals according to the radical order of their titles. In addition, the titles of the four types he proposed suggest overlapping concepts, making it hard to distinguish one group from another. All this makes it challenging for readers to grasp the relationship between the types of seals and their visual appearance.

In addition, Li Yuanguo 李遠國 and Lu Kunyong 盧崑永 reconfigured over 200 visual samples of Daoist ritual seals, re-drawn from the Ming Daoist Canon as well as stamped replicas of Ming-Qing copper seals in private collections (2002, 1-12). The authors chart the types of Daoist ritual seals into two major parts. The first, sub-divided into 78 kinds, sorts out seals based on the names of divinities associated with them plus their ritual function in summoning gods and subjugating demons (2002, 48-198). The second, containing 53 kinds, showcases seals of Daoist celestial bureaus, and ritual seals bearing charms and citations from scriptures (2002, 209-326). While the juxtaposition of one-to-two visual samples with pertinent citations from Daoist texts makes this study a useful handbook, the two-part types entail certain overlapping especially regarding the seals' ritual functions and thus is confusing.<sup>2</sup> The visual criteria underlining the types of Daoist seals, are missing.

Building on the aforementioned scholarship, I divide Daoist seals into four types: 1) seal script; 2) heavenly scripts; 3) talisman-inspired; and 4) graphic. My revised types stress the Daoist strategy of image-making, and the interlocking relationship of Daoist text and image.<sup>3</sup> The first type is purely script-based, moving toward the fourth type, which is purely graphic. What sets between the two categories is, in fact, the core zone of Daoist visual culture blending image with text.

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<sup>2</sup> For example, the Seal of the Office of the Northern Pole for Expelling Perversities (*Beiji quxie yuan yin* 北極驅邪院印), categorized under Part 2, is used for summoning gods and subjugating demons—a criterion associated with seals labeled as Part 1. Equally problematic is the Seal of the Departments of the Messengers of the Five Thunders (*Wulei shi yuan yin* 五雷使院印), classified under Part 2, which is noted for its power of summoning the heavenly army and subjugating the poisoned dragons (Li and Lu 2002, 211-15, 230-33).

<sup>3</sup> For more discussions of Daoist imagetexts, see Huang 2012, 11, 14, 21, 136, 139, 149, 154, 158, 165, 185, 232, 344. Also, see Huang 2017, 72, 96.

## Seals in Seal Script

Seals in seal script style occupy the smallest group of samples in the Daoist Canon.<sup>4</sup> Compared to other types, they are most legible and reflect Daoism's close relationship to mainstream seal culture current at that time. They typically evoke the judicial authorities in charge of major celestial bureaus crucial to Daoist rituals, such as the Seal of the Office of the Northern Pole for Expelling Perversities (*Beiji quxie yuanyin* 北極驅邪院印) (Fig. 1a), Seal of the Great Master of the Law of the Capital Heaven (*Dutian dafazhu yin* 都天大法主印) (Fig. 1b), Seal of the Office of the Heavenly Pivot of the High Clarity (*Shangqing tianshu yuanyin* 上清天樞院印) (Fig. 1c), and so on. These examples are all cited from Song texts, including the early twelfth century (ca. 1116) *Zhuguo jiumin biyao* 助國救民秘要 (DZ 1227; Skar 2000, 433-34) and the Southern Song *Tianshuyuan zhengfa* 天樞院正法 (DZ 549; Andersen in Schipper and Verellen, eds., 2004, 1068-70).<sup>5</sup>

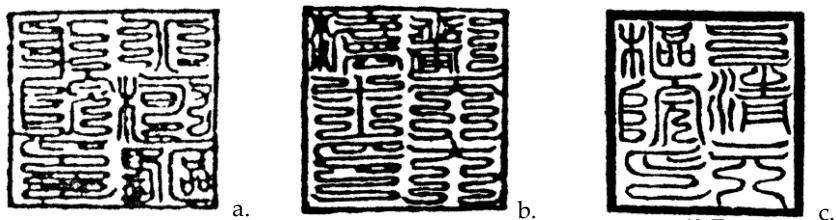


Fig. 1: Daoist ritual seals in seal script style. —a-b. *Zhuguo jiumin biyao*, DZ 1227, 32: 61; c. *Tianshuyuan zhengfa*, DZ 549, 10: 474.

<sup>4</sup> 20 seals of this category are reproduced in Wang 2000, 58-75; 2001, 472-93.

<sup>5</sup> The seals reproduced in Fig. 1a-c are from Wang's seals nos. 95, 180, 35 reproduced in Wang 2000, 66, 69, 72. For other seals featuring celestial bureaus, also rendered in seal script style, see Seal of the Office of the Refinement in the Upper Palace of the Nanchang (*Nanchang shanggong shouliansi yin* 南昌上宮受鍊司印), *Wushang huanglu dazhai lichengyi*, DZ 508, 9: 630; Seal of the Lord of the Dao (*Daojun yuyin* 道君玉印), *Shangqing lingbao dafa*, DZ 1221, 30: 902; Seal of the Immortal Capital of the Nine Elders (*Jiulao xiandu zhi yin* 九老仙都之印), *Sanhuang neiwen yimi*, DZ 856, 18: 583.

Beyond seals directly linked to ritual functions, seals marking the identities of Daoist masters—which individuals may have used as personal seals or for other religious functions—were often rendered in seal script style. For example, the personal seals stating different style names and Daoist titles of the Jin-dynasty Daoist Yan Deyuan 閻德源 (1094–1189), discovered in his tomb in Datong, Shanxi (Fig. 2a) (Datongshi 1978, 4; Wang 2000, 5), and the Seal of the Great Patriarch of Xuanjiao Daoism (Xuanjiao dazongshi yin 玄教大宗師印) of the renown Yuan-dynasty Daoist Wu Quanjie 吳全節 (1269–1346) (Fig. 2b) were all in seal script style. The four seals excavated from Daoist Yan's tomb bear various style names evoking his Daoist identity, such as "Teacher of the Ten-Foot Chamber of the Jade Void" (Yuxu zhangshi laoshi 玉虛丈室老師) and "Dragon Mount Daoist" (Longshan daoren 龍山道人).

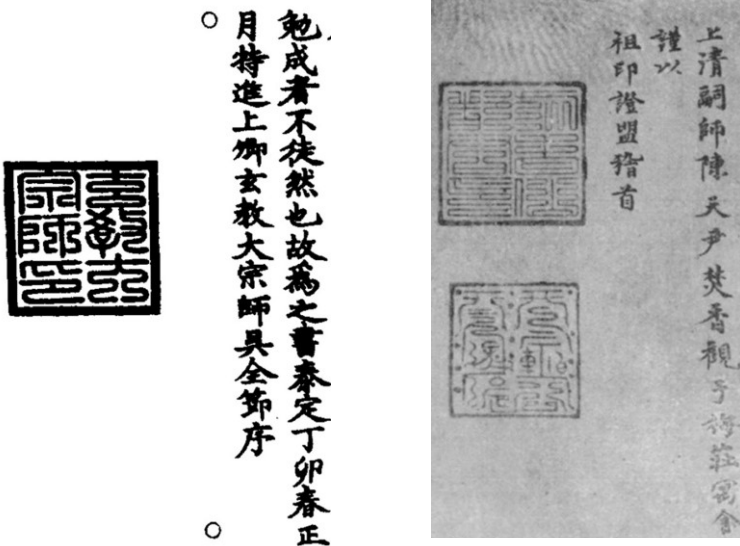


Fig. 2a. Personal Seals of Yan Deyuan.

An unusual Daoist seal in seal script style was discovered accompanied by a colophon of the late Yuan-to-early Ming Shangqing Daoist master Chen Tianyin 陳天尹 (Fig. 2c; Liaoning 2015, 203). It appears as part of a little-studied handscroll known as the "Scroll of Colophons in Honor of Zhou Wen-ying" (*Zhou Wenying tiba juan* 周文英題跋卷) in the Liaoning Provincial Museum collection (Yang 1979; Wang 2000, 8). Assembling a letter, a poem, a tomb epitaph, and a biography, the materials were written by different hands by late Yuan Daoist literati, including Yang Weizhen 楊維禎 (1296–1370) and Ni Zan 倪瓚 (1301–74), in memory of their deceased friend Zhou Wenying 周文英.

Master Chen inscribed his colophons twice, both before and after Ni Zan's colophon. He stamped various Daoist seals alongside his colophons, including the seal in seal script style, which accompanied his sec-

ond colophon. It reads, “Seal of the Lord of the Immortal Capital of the Nine Elders” (*Jiulao xiandu jun yin* 九老仙都君印) (Fig. 2c).<sup>6</sup> In Master Chen’s words, this and the other seal he stamped below it were “the seals inherited from the founder” (*zuyin* 祖印), suggesting that they may be older seals transmitted from earlier Shangqing Daoists. Wang Yucheng further linked the seal to a now-lost Northern Song seal bearing the same name and made by the Shangqing Daoist Liu Hunkang 劉混康 (1036-1108) upon Emperor Huizong’s 徽宗 (r. 1100-1126) request (Wang 2000, 95; *Maoshan yuanfu guan song bei* 茅山元符觀頌碑, *Maoshanzhi*, DZ 304, 5: 664; Ebrey 2008, 67-68; 2011; 2014, 131-59).



Figs. 2b-c

Personal Seals of Daoists in Script Style

The seals selected from the Daoist Canon (Fig. 1a-c) as well as that of Master Chen (Fig. 2c) are all rendered in the so-called layered seal script (*diezhuan* 疊篆), a style newly developed in Song-Yuan governmental sealing culture (Fig. 3a-b). Its trademark is the evenly arranged “spiral effect.” By transforming what may originally be single straight

<sup>6</sup> For more on samples and functions of the seal of the Nine Elders of the Immortal Capital of the High Clarity, see Wang 2000, 94-96; 2001, 495-97.

lines into spirals, it creates rhythmic layers and an overall grander visual effect (Lu 2009).

One of the earliest governmental seals best representing this trend is Emperor Huizong's Seal of the Inner Court Library (*Neifu tushu zhi yin* 內府圖書之印) (Figs. 3a), a Northern Song imperial seal used at the court of Emperor Huizong to authenticate selected paintings and calligraphic pieces in the imperial collection.<sup>7</sup> Numerous other official seals dated to the Liao, Jin (Jing et al., 2007), Xi Xia, and Yuan periods that imperial courts and peripheral bureaus used join this prestigious group. This includes the oft-cited Yuan imperial seal that reads "Treasures of Tianli" (*Tianli zhi bao* 天曆之寶) (Fig. 3b; Liao 2016, 93-94), that appears frequently on masterpieces of painting and calligraphy once collected at the court of Emperor Wenzong 元文宗 (1304-32). All this leads to the so-called "nine-layered seal script" (*jiudiezhuàn* 九疊篆) in Ming governmental seals.<sup>8</sup>

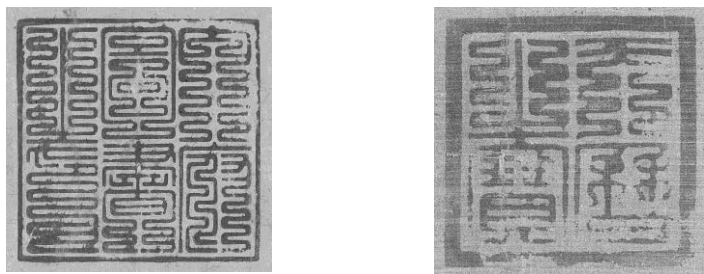


Fig. 3a-b: Imperial seals in layered seal script style-a. Seal of the Inner Bureau Library, Northern Song, on the Tang calligraphy *Jilong song* by Emperor Xuanzong. National Palace Museum, Taipei. b. Treasures of Tianli, Yuan dynasty, on the Northern Song painting, *Five-colored parakee* by Huizong's court. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (Liao 2016, 94).

<sup>7</sup> For more on Song imperial seals, including the "Shangshusheng" 尚書省 seals and the standard mounting format used at Emperor Huizong's court, see Peng 2008, 2009; Wang Y. 2004; Barnhart 1983; Ebrey 2008, 114-21. Emperor Huizong was personally interested in seal making and collecting, including Daoist seals. This is reflected in the now-lost *Xuanhe yinpu* 宣和印譜 compiled under his reign (Ren 2006, 247, 250; Zhao 1998, 55-58; Ebrey 2011).

<sup>8</sup> For more on seals in this style, see Luo 2010, 235, 237, 242, 245-49, 251-53; Jing et al. 2007; Fang 2008, 195-97, 201-13, 221-23; Lu 2009; Zhaonasiu 1997.

Recent scholarship has called attention to the Yuan official and Daoist seals in newly-invented Phags-pa script (*Basiba wen* 八思巴文) (Zhaonasiu 1997; Zhaonasiu and Xue 2011; Cai 2011; Ma 2017), which could have been stimulated by the official seals in layered seal script style wide spread in the Yuan. Ma Xiaolin 馬曉林 deciphered a rare seal in Phags-pa script associated with the Quanzhen patriarch Zhang Zhixian 張志仙 (Fig. 4a; Ma 2017, 58), who assumed his leadership in 1285. The seal was carved onto a stele dated 1301 and located in the Daoist Temple Dongzhen guan 洞真觀, Mt. Lanke 爛柯山, Luoyang, Henan. The Phags-pa script (Fig. 4b; Ma 2017, 59) underneath the Chinese characters reads, “The Seal of the Great Patriarch of the Mysterious School that Expounds the Dao (*Xuanmen yandao dazongshi zhangjiao zhiyin* 玄門演道大宗師掌教之印). It is embedded with multi-layered spirals that resemble the layered seal script in other aforementioned Daoist and imperial seals.

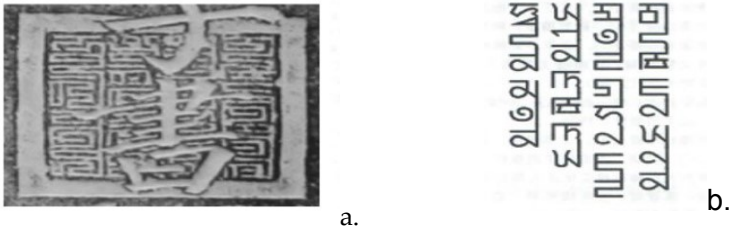


Fig. 4. a. Phagspa-script Seal of the Quanzhen Daoist Patriarch Zhang Zhixian. Dated 1301. b. Transliteration of the Phagspa script by Ma Xiaolin.

## Seals of Heavenly Scripts

This group is the largest among the four types and occupies over 40 percent of Daoist ritual seals Wang reproduced from Daoist texts.<sup>9</sup> They are part of Daoist “imagetexts,” since what Wang called talismanic seal script in fact belongs to the abundant and multifaceted repository of heavenly scripts (*tianshu* 天書) (Hsieh 2010). Other names include cloud seal (*yunzhuan* 雲篆), esoteric seal script (*mizhuanwen* 秘篆文), jade seal script (*yuzhuan* 玉篆), true writs (*zhenwen* 真文), heavenly writs (*tianwen*

<sup>9</sup> Wang has over 130 seals in this category (2000, 59-64; 2001, 472-78).



天文), hidden script (*yinshu* 隱書), vermilion script (*chishu* 赤書), self-generating jade graphs (*ziran yuzi* 自然玉字), and more (Wang 1991; Hsieh 2010; Huang 2012, 91-93, 141, 154-64; Ledderose 1984; Li 1997, 2003b).

Heavenly scripts appear frequently in Daoist scriptures and liturgical compilations preserved in the Daoist Canon. Some of these texts—mostly those dating to the thirteenth-to-fourteenth centuries—even juxtapose transliterations alongside the seemingly arcane writs to imbue a sense of legibility to the mysterious forms (Fig. 5a-b; see Hsieh 2017).

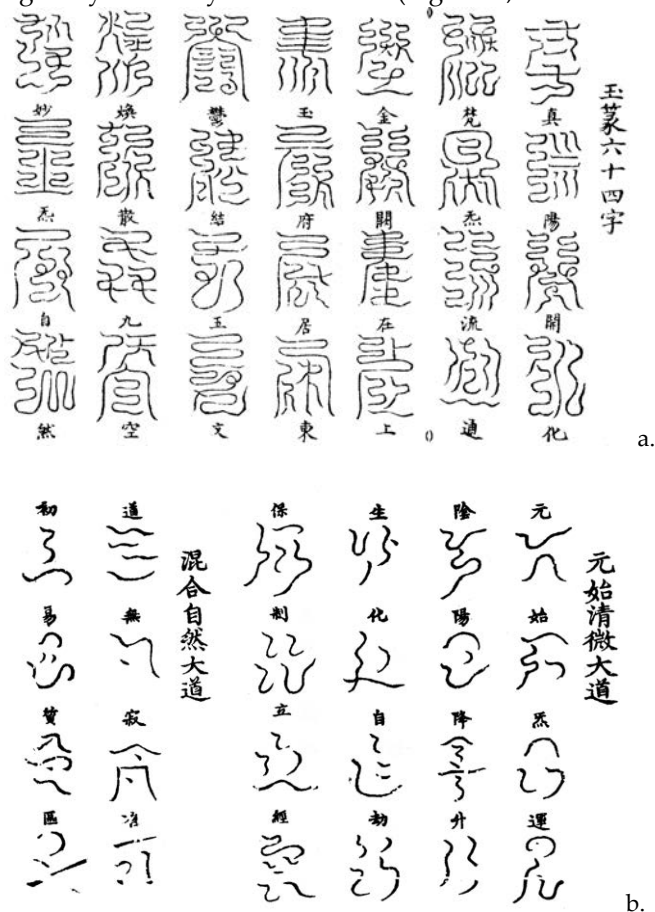


Fig. 5: Heavenly scripts with transliteration—a. Detail of sixty-four words in jade seal script with transliterations, *Shangqing lingbao dafa*, DZ 1221, 30: 791; b. Detail of the natural scripts, *Qingwei yuanjiang dafa*, DZ 223, 4: 161.

More and more comparable samples were discovered in archaeological sites such as a Tang Dunhuang manuscript (P. 2865) (Fig. 6a) and a number of Song tomb epitaphs (Fig. 6b) (Huang 2012, 141). Regrettably, this type of Daoist script was rarely documented or studied by scholars of Chinese calligraphy and seals; they remain esoteric to most modern readers.



Fig. 6: Archaeological samples of Daoist talismanic script—a. The celestial script of the three *qi*, detail from a Dunhuang manuscript. Ink on paper. Tang dynasty; b. Daoist true writs, rubbing from a tombstone. Northern Song dynasty, early eleventh century. Chengdu, Sichuan.

Pertinent to the lore of heavenly scripts is the phenomenon of thunder writs (*leishu* 雷書, *leiwén tianzhuan* 雷文天篆, *leizhuan zhenwen* 雷篆真文), a new category of thunder-inspired Daoist scripts, developed alongside the rise of thunder rite, a ritual noted for its efficacy in healing, exorcism, and rainmaking, first promoted by the Northern Song Divine Empyrean school and widely practiced by other Daoist schools in Song-Yuan China (Liu 1987; Li 2003a, 279-81; Li 2007; Huang 2012, 328). Thunder writs can be further linked to the so-called ghost script (*guishu* 鬼書), mentioned in Tang calligraphy discourse, a type of celestial script one finds on the corpse of an evil person struck by lightning (Li 1997, 42; Li et al., 2000, 93; Li 2003a, 376).

*Daofa huiyuan* provides ample samples of thunder writs, including historical anecdotes with transliterations (Li et al., 2000, 93) (Fig. 7). The

thunder writs shown here are in line with the aforementioned heavenly scripts—completely incomprehensible to ordinary eyes. Writing in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, Zhou Mi 周密 (1232-98) cites anecdotes of thunder writs people spotted on various architectural surfaces in Buddhist temples and wine shops alike. Except a few legible words, “all the rest look like incomprehensible Daoist talismanic scripts” (*Qidong yeyu* 齊東野語, 12: 11a-b, *Siku quanshu* edition).

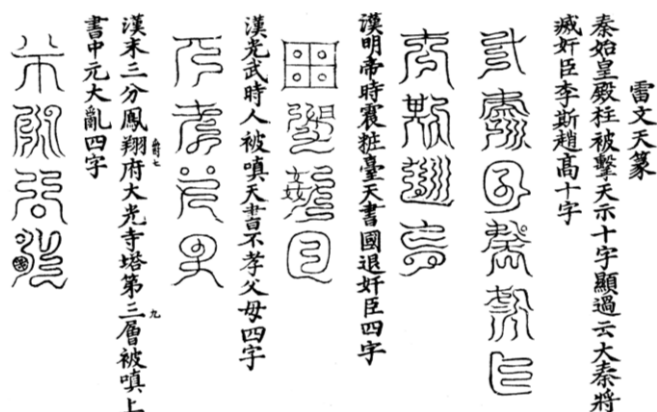


Fig. 7: Thunder Writs. *Daofa huiyuan*, DZ 1200, 28: 248.

The seals reproduced in the following group show traces of how Daoist talismanic writs depart from traditional writings to create their own idioms (Fig. 8a-d).<sup>10</sup> The curvy writs in each seal are rendered in individual word-like units and, similar to the seals in layered seal script style, they bear repetitive spirals. What differentiates them from the previous group, however, is that curvy lines no longer appear only in parallel spirals. Rather, they are intertwined, crossing over one another, just like clouds or cosmic *qi* in motion. One observes doubling, tripling, abbreviating, or simply reconfiguring of certain compartments of legible words. Fig. 8a reads, “Dragon scripts of the eight daunters” (*bawei longwen* 八威龍文). This stamped seal can be used for posting or medicine-taking. Fig. 8b has, “Seal of the Highest of the Three Heavens” (*Santian*

<sup>10</sup> The seals reproduced in Fig. 8a-d are from Wang’s seals nos. 5, 22, 163, 110 reproduced in Wang 2000, 65-66, 69, 71.

*taishang zhi yin* 三天太上之印). It is used for stamping on envelopes of liturgical documents submitted to gods.

In addition, many seals in this category bear word-like elements hard to decipher. The Seal of the Three Departments of Tai, Xuan, and Du (*Tai xuan du sheng yin* 泰玄都省印) (Fig. 8c), therefore, is “a seal inherited from the founder” (*zuyin* 祖印), arguably transmitted from Han-dynasty Celestial Masters and later used to summon celestial military forces.<sup>11</sup> At first glimpse, the scripts bear balanced layered spirals comparable to the first seal type (Fig. 1a-c). But perhaps because the seal design was “altered after the regular seal script” (*Lingbao shangjing dafa*, DZ 219, 3: 1061), the scripts are meant to be esoteric. Adding to this is the illegible Seal of the Jade Emperor (*Yudi yin* 玉帝印) (Fig. 8d), used for summoning the dragon to the adept’s visualization in order to facilitate his cosmic journey (Li and Lu 2002, 71). The style recalls the abbreviated natural scripts associated with Qingwei Daoism (Fig. 5b).

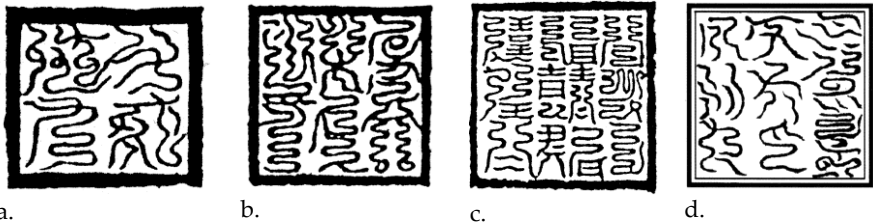


Fig. 8: Seals in heavenly scripts—a. Seal of the dragon scripts, *Shangqing lingbao dafa*, DZ 1221, 30: 902; b. Seal of the Highest of the Three Heavens, *Wushang huanglu dazhai lichengyi*, DZ 508, 9: 629; c. the Seal of the Three Departments, *Lingbao wuliang duren shangjing dafa*, DZ 219, 3: 1061; d. Seal of the Jade Emperor, *Taishang dengzhen sanjiao lingying jing* 太上登真三矯靈應經, DZ 286, 5: 4.

Surprisingly, at the end of a highly regarded calligraphic scroll, *Ji-long song* 鵲鵲頌 (Ode on Pied Wagtails) by the Tang emperor Xuanzong, dated 719 and now in the National Palace Museum, Taipei (Liu ed., 2008, 86-89; Hou 2012), there is a rare Daoist seal (Fig. 9a-b) whose wavy writs

<sup>11</sup> For an explanation of the term, see Luk 2015, 122-23. Cf. a different definition of the term by Skar 1996, 180-181, n. 46.

resemble those of the aforementioned seals.<sup>12</sup> While its mysterious content is not deciphered, it seems plausible to read it as consisting of six talismanic scripts composed in three vertical rows, with two in each row. The curvilinear strokes of the writs follow a similar interlocking pattern not unlike the script style analyzed earlier.

The seal's placement invites a potential link to the historical milieu associated with Emperor Huizong, who supported Daoism and the production of Daoist seals, talismans, and paintings (Ebrey 2008, 67-71; 2011; 2014, 131-59). The seal was stamped prominently on the upper part of the yellow silk damask immediately after the work. At the border of this piece of silk damask we also find multiple Northern Song imperial seals reflecting the so-called Xuanhe mounting (Xuanhe zhuang 宣和裝) (Barnhart 1983; Ebrey 2008, 114-20; 2014). This is a coded mounting and sealing program Huizong used in authenticating masterpieces of painting and calligraphy in his court collection (Liu 2008, 82).

To the right of the seal is the "Zhenghe" 政和 elongated seal on the upper right of the brocade. Corresponding to this is the "Xuanhe" 宣和 elongated seal on the lower right of the brocade. To the left edge of the brocade, we see the "Zheng" 政 and "He" 禾 square seals stamped at the center. A little bit away from this group of seals is the most prominent, oversized Seal of the Inner Court Library (*Neifu tushu zhiyin*) in layered seal script style (Fig. 3a), describe earlier.<sup>13</sup> Two colophons following Huizong's imperial seals were from the hands of Cai Jing 蔡京 (1047-1126), a well-documented official particularly close to Emperor Huizong (Ebrey 2008, 2014), and his brother Cai Bian 蔡卞 (1048-1117) (Fig. 23c), who signed his name here with an administrative title, Messenger of the Temple of the Central Taiyi (*Zhong taiyi gongshi* 中太一宮使), suggesting a potential link of this scroll's readership to the prominent imperial-

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<sup>12</sup> For a section-by-section reproduction of this scroll, including the Daoist seal, see the online database published by the National Palace Museum, Taipei: [http://painting.npm.gov.tw/Painting\\_Page.aspx?dep=P&PaintingId=14715](http://painting.npm.gov.tw/Painting_Page.aspx?dep=P&PaintingId=14715) (retrieved on October 10, 2017).

<sup>13</sup> These imperial seals, together with a selection of brocade and paper in specific measurements, constitute the signature Xuanhe mounting formula, a coded formula Huizong used in authenticating masterpieces in his collection (Liu 2008, 82).

patronized Daoist temple—Temple of the Central Taiyi (Zhong taiyi gong 中太一宮)— in the Song capital Kaifeng.<sup>14</sup>

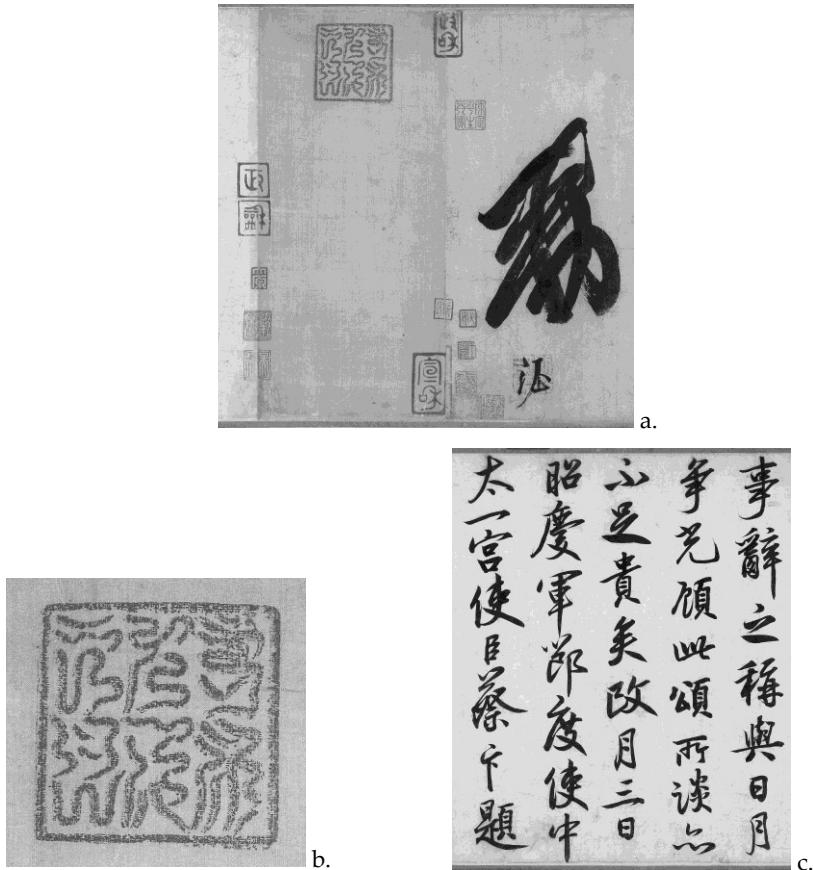


Fig. 9: Seal and Colophon from the *Jilong song*. Detail of the mounting brocade (25x11.2 cm).

While the previous group of seals shed light on the fundamental taste of Daoist talismanic writs, other seals exhibit still a wider range in variation. A case in point is a series of closely comparable Seals of the

<sup>14</sup> Some scholars of calligraphy speculate that the two colophons by the Cai brothers were in fact copies. That said, Hou Yili cited historical records that confirm that the two brothers have inscribed colophons on the *Jilong song*.

Bureau of the Great Numinous Treasures (*Lingbao dafasi yin* 靈寶大法司印) recorded in the Southern Song-to-Ming Daoist texts (Fig. 10a).<sup>15</sup> The seal was mainly used for sealing liturgical documents and envelopes (Wang 2000, 94; Li 2003b; Ren 2006, 248).<sup>16</sup> These seal samples compare closely to an actual bronze seal (Ming?), now in the collection of the History Museum, Beijing (Fig. 10b) (Wang 2000, 94; cf. Luo 2010, 60). The multiplicity of this seal template speaks volumes about the popularity and longevity of the seals' transmission.

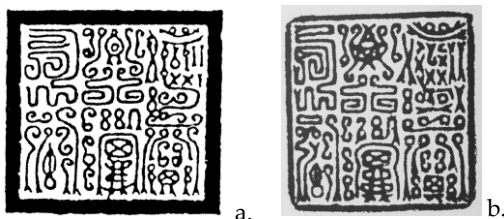


Fig. 10. Seals of the Bureau of the Great Numinous Treasures—a. *Shangqing lingbao dafa*, DZ 1223, 31: 398; b. Seal template of the bronze seal, Ming, History Museum, Beijing.



Fig. 11: Jade Scripts of the Bright Great Brahma, *Lingbao lingjiao jidu jinshu*, DZ 466, 8: 278.

Stylistically, the overall design appears more ornamental and graphic in comparison to the seals in heavenly writs discussed earlier (Fig. 8a-d). This is most evident in the lines ending with spiral or Y-

<sup>15</sup> The one reproduced in Fig. 8a of this article is no. 256. Cf. seals nos. 255, 257-259 in Wang 2000, 64, 75; Tseng 1993, 104 (Fig. 5.28); Li and Lu 2002, 209.

<sup>16</sup> For the size guideline, see *Shangqing lingbao dafa*, DZ 1223, 31: 398. Cf. contemporary seals rendered in seal script style and used by Taiwanese Daoists to evoke the same Daoist celestial office (Wang 2000, 95). When used in contemporary Taiwan, the seal is used for funeral-related rituals; see Su 1999, 179.

shaped hooks, which in turn call to mind the so-called “jade scripts of bright Great Brahma” (*dafan guangming yuzi* 大梵光明玉字) (Fig. 11) (Legeza 1975, 69; Li et al., 2000, 183), a rare and fairly stylized variation of heavenly scripts preserved in the thirteenth-century liturgical compilation of the Numinous Treasures Daoism.

This ornamental script style may reflect the cultural trend of antiquarianism in Song China (Huang 2012, 161). Its visual prototype can be traced to such archaic scripts as the bird script (*niao zhuan* 鳥篆), bird-and-insect script (*niao chong shu* 鳥蟲書) (Han 1987; Cao 1999; Tseng 1993, 82-83, 103-104; Louis 2003; Luo 2010; Hou 2011), or fish-and-insect seal script (*yuchong zhuan* 魚蟲篆) inspired by birds, fish, and insects, evident in the Han seal carving (Fig. 12a; Luo 2010, 132; Hu 2005, 134) and the birdscripts (Fig. 12b-c; Cao 1999, 7; Louis 2003, 15; Huang 2012, 157) inlaid on the surfaces of two bronze *hu* vessels discovered in the Western Han tomb of Prince Liu Sheng (165-113 BCE) in Mancheng, Hebei.

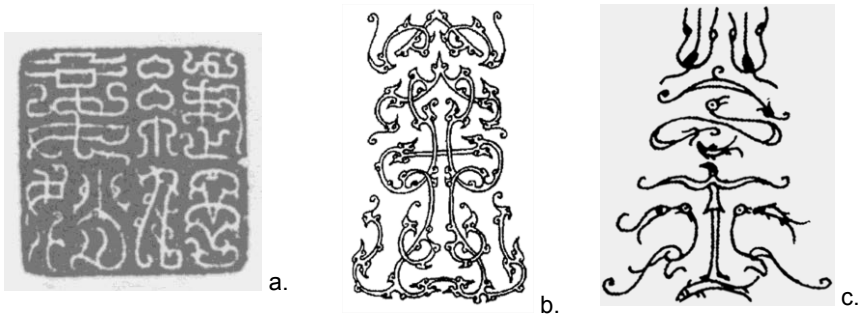


Fig. 12: Ancient birdscripts.

For example, the character *jin* 荃 (splendid) (Fig. 12c), whose modern line drawing was retrieved from the inlaid lid of the same *hu* vessel, is composed of playful birds and fish.<sup>17</sup> Its overall design recalls an archaic Qin imperial seal recorded by the Southern Song scholar Zhao

<sup>17</sup> The same episode was recorded in various Song-Yuan official sources, including *Xu Zizhi tongjian changbian* 續資治通鑑長編 (Extended Continuation to the Comprehensive Mirror in Aid of Governance 496: 2a-b) and *Songshi* 宋史 (the Song History 154: 4a-b), although no illustration was provided there. For more study, see Li 2006.



Yanwei 趙彥衛 (1163 *jinshi*) in his *Yunlu manchao* 雲麓漫抄 (Free Copy of the Cloudy Foothill; pref. 1206) (Fig. 13a-b; Li 2006, 54; Huang 2012, 157).

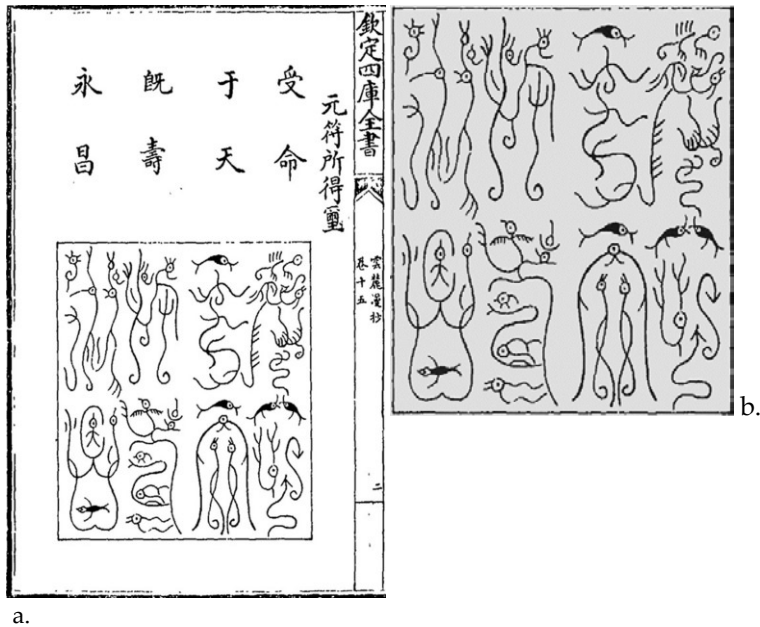


Fig. 13a-b. Transliteration and line drawing, full-page and in detail, of a Qin-dynasty jade seal, reported-ly found in 1098 near Xianyang, Henan (*Yunlu manchao* 15: 2b).

Zhao provides a transliteration of the seemingly illegible imagetext. It reads, "receive the order from heaven, long live and prosper forever" (*shouming yu tian, ji shou yongchang* 受命于天, 既壽永昌). This fish seal script or fish-and-insect seal script was presented to the Northern Song court by a citizen named Duan Yi 段義 from Xianyang 咸陽 in 1098. Duan claimed that he unearthed this ancient seal in 1096 in the Liuyin Village 劉銀村, Henan. Upon receiving this, the Song government summoned a connoisseurship committee led by Cai Jing 蔡京 to authenticate the seal.

Based on its unusually blue-like green luster that was highly regarded as a trademark of the original jade produced in Blue Field (Lanti-an 藍田) in Shaanxi, the intricate carvings on the seal knob, and the fish-and-insect seal script, the committee concluded that it was a genuine seal

of the Qin time (*Yunlu manchao*15: 9a-b). Curiously, the jade seal illustrated by Zhao Yanwei compares remarkably to a large square seal (Fig. 13c), stamped on the upper right corner of the world-renown Southern Song ink painting depicting the Chan patriarch (Fig. 13d) (Li 2006).<sup>18</sup>



c.

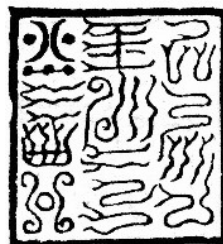


d.

Fig. 13c-d Seal on one of the paired scrolls of *Chan Patriarchs Taming the Mind*. Southern Song. Ink on paper. Tokyo National Museum.



a.



b.

Fig. 14: Seals evoking cosmic qi and light—a. Seal in Jade Script of the Three Mysterious Flying Qi, *Daofa huiyuan*, DZ 1220, 30: 167; b. Seal of the Purple Light and Cinnabar Heaven, *Daofa huiyuan*, DZ 1220, 30: 140.

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<sup>18</sup> The painting is one of the two paintings that form a set entitled Two Chan Patriarchs Taming the Mind (*Erzu tiaoxin tu* 二祖調心圖), attributed to the tenth-century painter Shi Ke 石恪. For an interactive image file of the two Southern Song paintings of the Chan Patriarchs, see the e-Museum website: < [http://www.emuseum.jp/detail/100832/000/000?mode=detail&d\\_lang=zh&s\\_lang=zh&class=&title=&c\\_e=&region=&era=&century=&cptype=&owner=&pos=225&num=1](http://www.emuseum.jp/detail/100832/000/000?mode=detail&d_lang=zh&s_lang=zh&class=&title=&c_e=&region=&era=&century=&cptype=&owner=&pos=225&num=1) > (retrieved on September 24, 2017).

In a similar vein, some other Daoist seals named after cosmic *qi* or light borrow selected visual elements from the ancient scripts inspired by birds and insects (Fig. 13a-b). One observes a bird's head at the center of the Seal in Jade Script of the Three Mysterious Flying Qi (*Feixuan sanqi yuzhang zhi yin* 飛玄三炁玉章之印) (Fig. 14a), a seal to be stamped on liturgical envelopes (Li and Lu 2002, 277).<sup>19</sup> The Seal of the Purple Light and Cinnabar Heaven (*Ziguang dantian yin* 紫光丹天印) (Fig. 14b), a ritual seal in the possession of a thunder-rite master to be stamped on the dragon-summoning document (cf. Reiter 2007, 110), also bear script-like symbols with lines and spirals, or lines that begin or end with a "Y" shape. Unlike the Seals of the Bureau of the Great Numinous Treasures (Fig. 10a-b), which are "legible", these symbols are not meant to be legible words.

The preoccupation with thunder power in Song-Yuan Daoism has stimulated more creations of seal designs, infusing still more innovative graphic idioms to the growing repertoire of Daoist writs. Let us start with two groups of seals used widely in thunder rites and best documented in Daoist historical sources, archaeological finds, and contemporary practices.

The first group features Seals of the Thunderclap Bureau (*Leiting du-si zhi yin* 雷霆都司之印) (Fig. 15a-e), noted for its power to summon the thunder troops. In the *Daofa huiyuan* version (Fig. 15a-b), the back side of the seal also bears engraved graphs (Li and Lu 2002, 216-17), available in two alternative templates (Fig. 26b-c below), which we will turn to when we discuss the fourth type. The Thunder Sire Shaoyang (Shaoyang leigong 邵陽雷公) is said to activate the seal's power of exorcism by "shining the seal upon the poisonous dragon" (*zhao qi dulong* 照其毒龍) (Sakai 2012, 30), just like a mirror.<sup>20</sup> Surprisingly, two Jin seals excavated in Heilongjiang 黑龍江 (Fig. 15c-d) in the 1980s and 1990s respectively demonstrate striking similarity with the seal samples illustrated in *Daofa*

<sup>19</sup> It is the seal no. 175 reproduced in Wang 2000, 62, 71. Cf. seal no. 174 in Wang 2000, 62, 71.

<sup>20</sup> Buddhist talismanic seals recorded in medieval Dunhuang manuscripts were sometimes treated as "the source of illumination" (Copp 2011, 211). For a Daoist mirror bearing graphs of talismans and constellations, recorded in Emperor Hui-zong's antiquities catalogue and discovered in archaeological finds, see Ebrey 2008, 197 (Fig. 6.38); Huang 2012, 225-26 (Figs. 4.41-4.44).

*huiyuan* (Figs. 15a-b), suggesting that the circulation of such seals was not restricted to the south.<sup>21</sup>

The second group, Seals of the Great Thunder Fire of the Capital Heaven (Dutian daleihuo yin 都天大雷火印) (Fig. 16a-c),<sup>22</sup> summon celestial officials, control demons of mountains and rivers, and evoke rain. They can be used in sealing talismanic ritual documents and “stamping disease and demons” (*yin bing yin gui* 印病印鬼) (*Daofa huiyuan*, DZ 1220, 29: 594). “Whenever one moves the seal, the thunder strikes as well” (*yindong leidong* 印動雷動) (*Tianshuyuan zhengfa*, DZ 549, 10: 473).<sup>23</sup> The Southern Song *Tianshuyuan zhengfa* describes the seal script reproduced in Fig. 16b as “layered celestial-writ seal script” (*die tianwen zhuan* 疊天文篆) (Li 2003a, 296; Li and Lu 2002, 159).<sup>24</sup>

At first glimpse, viewers are confronted with dots and graphs that are integrated to form organic scripts. The most eye-catching visual innovation lies in the graphic reconfiguration of the word “lei” 雷, referring to “thunder” (Figs. 15a-e, 16a, 16c). The lower compartment of the “lei” character is now replaced with an incised axe-shaped pattern filled with three dots.

In a similar vein, repetitive motifs of an incised rhombus or square pattern enclosing a dot take over parts of the scripts of “du” 都 and “yin” 印. Furthermore, many more strokes are simply replaced with incised or relief dots, such as the renditions of “lei” 雷, “ting” 霆, “huo” 火, “da” 大,

<sup>21</sup> For a study of the spread of Daoist teachings (esp. the Quanzhen Daoism) in northeast China in the Jin dynasty, see Wang 2012.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. the seal samples reproduced in Li and Lu 2002, 216-17, 231.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Wang 2000, 105-109. Note that I treat the seals discussed here as an expansion of the seals in talismanic script, namely, the second type according to Wang’s types. This is different from Wang’s classification of these seals, which he groups them under the fourth type, seals in talismanic graphic style. Fig. 25a-b, d-e reproduced in this article correspond to the seals nos. 234-1, 232, 185, and 183 reproduced in Wang 2000, 72, 74.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. similar designs of Seal of the City God Justice (*Tiju chenghuang yin* 提舉城隍司印) and Seal of the Immortal Capital of the Nine Elders (*Jiulao xiandu zhi yin* 九老仙都之印) in *Tianshuyuan zhengfa*, DZ 549, 10: 474; *Shangqing lingbao dafa*, DZ 1221, 30: 902.

and "zhi" 之. The heavy uses of dots and the visual contrast of incised and relief markings make the overall designs animated.

The thunder-inspired seals find their contemporary counterparts in liturgical seals used by Daoists in Taiwan. The two seal templates shown here (Figs. 15e, 16c) are from two six-sided compact seals used in contemporary Daoist rituals. The Seal of the Thunder Bureau in the Taiwanese Daoist Hong Baijian's collection (Fig. 15e) is comparable to the Jin-dynasty seals discovered in Heilongjiang (Fig. 15c-d); it is for sealing documents associated with the thunder rite.<sup>25</sup> The Great Thunder Fire of the Capital Heaven (Fig. 16c) engraved on one of the six-sided seal owned by the Daoist Hong Baijian 洪百堅, demonstrates a reverse design that resembles Fig. 16a.

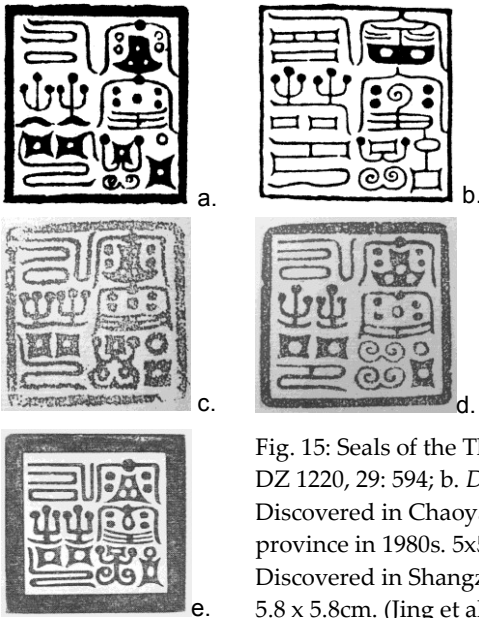


Fig. 15: Seals of the Thunder Bureau — a. *Daofa huiyuan*, DZ 1220, 29: 594; b. *Daofa huiyuan*, DZ 1220, 29: 150; c. Discovered in Chaoyang, Wuchang, Heilongjiang province in 1980s. 5x5 cm. (Jing et al. 2007, 9: 476); d. Discovered in Shangzhi, Heilongjiang province in 1991. 5.8 x 5.8cm. (Jing et al. 2007, 9: 475); e. One of the six-sided seal designs used by the Celestial Master in contemporary Taiwan (Su ed., 1999, 179).

<sup>25</sup> Although engraved on a single seal, these seal templates are used for different purposes. For reproductions, see Su 1999, 179.

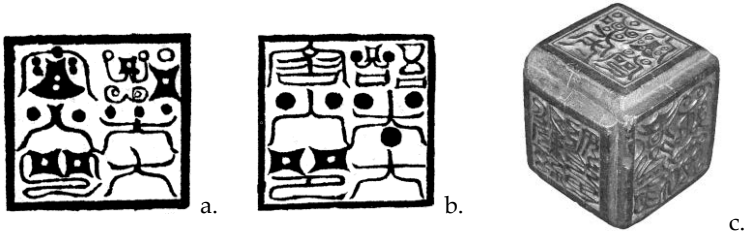


Fig. 16: Seals of the Great Thunder Fire of the Capital Heaven—a. *Daofa huiyuan*, DZ 1220, 29: 150; b. *Tianshuyuan zhengfa*, DZ 549, 10: 473; c. Six-sided Seal owned by Daoist Hong Baijian in Taiwan (Wang 2000, 240).

## Talisman-Inspired Seals

The third type Wang Yucheng proposed refers to the talisman-inspired seals (Wang 2000, 55, 59-75). This is the second largest type among the four, occupying over 30 percent of the seal samples he retrieved from Ming and pre-Ming Daoist texts. Many seals examined in earlier article, including the Daoist and Buddhist seals from the Dunhuang manuscripts (Huang 2017, Figs. 12-14) and the series of Yue Seals (2017, Figs. 5b, 6a-d, 7a-d) can be grouped under this category.

To make the connection between seal and talisman, it is useful to outline what constitutes the basic form of a talisman (Li et al. 2000; Li 2003a, 395-400; Despeux 2000, Mollier 2003, 2008; Sakade et al., 2005; Verellen 2006; Tseng 1993, 79-96).<sup>26</sup> Using anthropomorphic terms, Li Yuanguo unpacked the stereotype of a talismanic structure in tripartite (Li et al., 2000, 107; Li 2003a, 395-97). The head of a talisman (*futou* 符頭) often extends its symmetrical components from the top to both sides, covering the left and right contour. The feet of a talisman (*fujiao* 符腳) refers to the lower part. The abdomen or gallbladder of a talisman (*fufu* 符腹 or *fudan* 符膽) refers to the most essential component enclosed in the middle part of a talisman, just like the inner realm of the abdomen or gallbladder covered within a human body. The esoteric spells are sometimes integrated within the abdomen of the talisman (*funei shu yizhou* 腹

<sup>26</sup> For an excellent introduction to Daoist talismans, see the film entitled “The One Hundred Day Exorcistic Talisman” (*Baijie fu* 百解符) by Patricia Fava: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IAI9azG\\_SWQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IAI9azG_SWQ) (retrieved on November 16, 2017). Thanks to Hsieh Shu-wei for his input.

內書役咒; *Daofa huiyuan*, DZ 1220, 30: 215), covered by other strokes superimposed on them when the talisman is completed, and thus remain esoteric to the untrained eye.

One can glimpse the talisman-making procedure from numerous illustrated instructions preserved in liturgical compilations in the Daoist Canon (Fig. 17). The "decomposed forms" (*sanxing* 散形) detail step-by-step "how-to-draw" guidelines along with spells to be chanted while drawing the talisman. This is followed by the "assembled form" (*juxing* 聚形), which represents a finished sample of a talisman. The sample shown here is the decomposed and assembled forms of the Talisman of the Three Luminants of the Sun, the Moon, and the Northern Dipper (*Sanguang fu* 三光符) (Fig. 17), a major talisman essential to the Song-dynasty Celestial Heart (Tianxin 天心) Daoists in exorcism, healing, and thunder rites (Despeux 2000, 511; Li 2003a, 401).

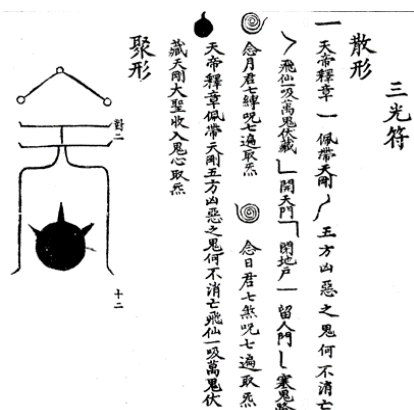


Fig. 17: Decomposed and Assembled Forms of the Three Luminants, *Taishang zhuguo jiumin zongzhen biyao*, DZ 1227, 32: 61.

A talisman is often composed of a mixture of writs and graphs. One classic design principle originating in early medieval Daoism is to incorporate the so-called compound scripts (*fuwen* 複文) (Fig. 18) into a talisman (Fig. 19a). This is a unique Daoist writ noted for its multiplicity of the same characters to form a complex script.

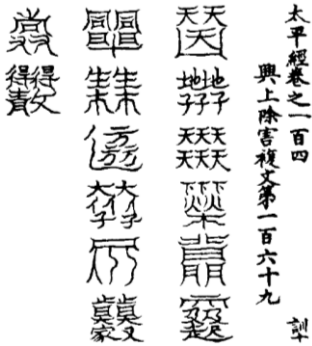


Fig. 18: Compound scripts, *Taiping jing*, DZ 1101, 24: 524.

The oft-cited examples from *Taiping jing* 太平經 (Fig. 18; Wang 1960, 475), for instance, show that within one unit of *fuwen* writ, it is possible to juxtapose double characters of “di” 地, “huo” 火, “yue” 月, “ri” 日, “sheng” 生, “mu” 木, or triple characters of “tian” 天, “zi” 子, “xia” 下, “fang” 方, “ or even six times of “tian” 天. We observe a similar composing principle underlining the talisman to open the mind and get rid of delusion (*kaixin biwang* 開心辟妄) (Fig. 19a), recorded in the Six Dynasties *Zhen gao* 真誥 (DZ 1016, 20: 542; Sakade et al., 2007, 66-67).

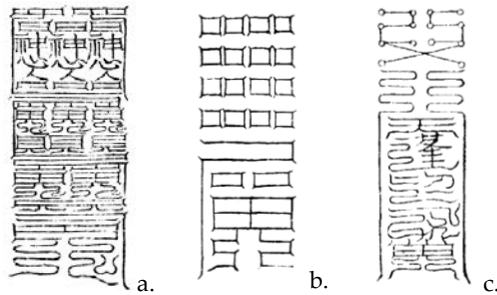


Fig. 19: Talismans—a. Talisman to open the mind and disperse absurdity, *Zhen gao*, DZ 1016, 20: 542; b. Talisman evoking the sixth star of the Northern Dipper, *Beidou qiyuan jinxuan*, DZ 753, 17: 88; c. Talisman of Tienpeng, *Daofa huiyuan*, DZ 1220, 30: 50.

The other visual strategy for talisman-making is to integrate cosmic symbols referring to the sun, the constellation, and so on. For example, the talisman associated with the sixth star (Quwuxing 武曲星) of the Northern Dipper (Fig. 19b) is composed of multiple square motifs that symbolize the light of the constellation (see Li and Lu 2002, 170). In addi-



tion, the talisman in the name of the exorcist deity Tianpeng (*Tianpeng xifu* 天蓬檄符) (Fig. 19c) bears lined dots symbolizing the constellation, especially the Northern Dipper; it also contains legible words such as the name of the deity, "Tianpeng" 天蓬, and "gui" 鬼 (demon).

When adapting a talismanic design to a seal counterpart, several modifications take place along with the change of media. Unlike the mainstream talismans, which are elongated in shape, Daoist seals are often cut in square, and their sizes are much smaller than talismans. This implies that a seal designer/carver would have to truncate or simplify a talismanic design when he transfers the design from a talisman to a seal. Furthermore, switching from "writing" talismans with the traditional brush on paper to seal "carving" on wood and other hard surfaces would naturally compromise the nuances of the thickening and thinning of calligraphic brushstrokes.

The Tianpeng Seal (Fig. 20a), the Plague-expelling Seal (Fig. 20b), the Seal Evoking the Sun (Fig. 20c), and the Seal of the Supreme Tenuity (*Taiwei* 太微) (Fig. 20d), serve as good examples of talisman-inspired seals.<sup>27</sup> These seals embody elements of the constellation and compound scripts comparable to talismans discussed earlier; they also look much more "squeezed" in comparison to the elongated talismans, with much more intensely packed angular switchbacking lines. Stylistically, the intense parallel lines in Figs. 20a-b, in particular, recall the busy graphs seen in the group of the Yue Seals discussed in Part 1 of this study (Huang 2017, 81-82).

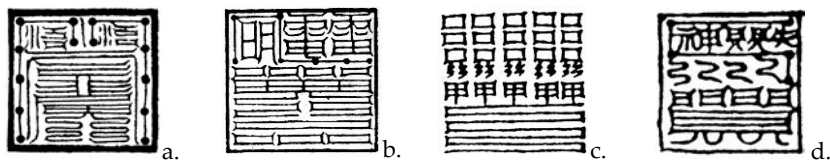


Fig. 20: Talisman-inspired Seals—a. Tianpeng Seal, *Daofa huiyuan*, DZ 1220, 29: 829; b. Plague-expelling Seal, *Gaoshang shenxiao yuqing zhenwang zishu dafa*, DZ 1219, 28: 619; c. The Seal Evoking the Sun, *Huangdi taiyi bamen rushi mijue*, DZ 587, 10: 778; d. Seal of the Supreme Tenuity, *Shagui lu*, DZ 1215, 28: 526.

<sup>27</sup> Fig. 17a-d are numbered 66, 194, 83-1, and 53 in Wang 2000, 59-60, 64-65, 67, 74. For an explanation of the Supreme Tenuity, see Skar 1996, 168.

Seals reproduced here, on the other hand, compare closely to a specific type of healing talismans rendered in a simpler composition shorter than the standard talismans, with heavy uses of compound scripts (Fig. 21) (Lin 2013, 435, 447; Ren 2006, 199-200). Such therapeutic talismans address such physical issues as headache, stomach ache, and digestion difficulty (Fig. 21); they also address mental problems, such as enhancing memory (*kaixin qiangji* 開心強記) and curing depression (*jie beisi* 解悲思).<sup>28</sup>



Fig. 21: Talismans for healing digestive problems. *Suling zhenfu*, DZ 389, 6: 356.

A small sub-group of seals of this type demonstrate unusually complicated designs in a slightly elongated composition (Fig. 22a-c; see Li and Lu 2002, 113-14). Their graphic designs resemble Daoist registers (*lu* 籙; Amy Lynn Miller in Pregadio ed., 2007, 39-42), coupons (*juan* 券), or contracts (*hetong* 合同) (Fig. 23), an assortment of talismanic documents whose compositions are wider than standard talismans and were used in ordination or salvation rituals (Huang 2012, 34, 278-79). Compared to a typical talisman that tends toward a vertical and elongated structure, a register or a coupon like those shown here bears a wider composition,

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, *Suling zhenfu*, DZ 389, 6: 343, 348-49, 358-59. Perhaps just because these healing talismans are easier to draw, they were adapted in non-Daoist medical treatises and encyclopedia of the Song and Yuan periods. For more recent studies acknowledging the common uses of talismans and seals in Chinese medicine and Daoist practices, see Lin 2013; Lin Fushi and TJ Hinrichs in Hinrichs and Barnes eds., 2013, 68, 111.

with talismanic elements filled in multiple "lines". Interestingly, all the seals that resemble miniature registers or ritual coupons are associated with demon-quelling or demon-summoning, and evoke the North Pole (Beiji 北極), the North Emperor (Beidi 北帝), and the Daoist underworld Fengdu 酆都 (Mollier 1997, esp. 367-69; Huang 2012, 120-34, 254-61).<sup>29</sup>



Fig. 22: Seal designs that resemble Daoist registers, coupons or contracts—a. The Premier Demon-quelling Seal by the North Emperor, *Fumo shenzhou miaojing*, DZ 1412, 34: 415; b-c. North Pole Demon-quelling Seal, and Fengdu demon-summoning Seal, *Shagui lu*, DZ 1215, 28: 525.



Fig. 23: Daoist coupons and contract, *Lingbao lingjiao jidu jinshu*, DZ 466, 8: 350-51.

<sup>29</sup> I am grateful for Dr. Saikai Norifumi for his input.

## Graphic Seals

Seals dominated by graphs make up about 15 percent of all the Daoist seals reproduced in Wang Yucheng's seal index (2000, 55, 59-75).<sup>30</sup> Moving from the first type that is word-based, here we swing to the other pole of the Daoist imagetext seesaw. The graphic seals can be further divided into two groups, one making reference to the animated cosmic qi, and the other citing diagrammatical conventions of Daoist ritual space, lamp maps, and charts of numerology.

The first group (Fig. 24a-d) conveys the movement of cosmic qi through linear graphs highlighted by curvy lines.<sup>31</sup> The unusual round-shaped Seal of the Taiji 太極 (Fig. 24a) preserved in a text associated with the thunder-rite bears the most fantastic graphs (Li and Lu 2002, 154). In particular, the labyrinth occupying the upper half of the overall composition, is in fact created by an unbroken stroke traveling back and forth along the left-and-right direction, just like writing a talisman. The whimsical line starts from the upper left corner of the seal template, continues in rhythmical spirals toward the upper right corner of the seal, and heads back toward the left edge of the seal in a plainer linear fashion punctuated by three small circles. This line then turns downward when it reaches the left edge of the design, and begins a different cycle of up-and-down movement. At the middle of the composition, it slides to the right edge and starts yet another series of switchbacking movement, moving horizontally and downwards. Finally, it turns dramatically upward and ends at the upper right corner of the composition. Similar graphic principles, if not equally elaborate, govern the underpinning designs of the Seal of the Lord of the Dao (*Daojun yin* 道君印) (Fig. 24b) used in salvation rituals (Li and Lu 2002, 55). The Seal for Sending Petitions in the Flying Steps of the Nine Spirits (*Faqian jiuling feibu zhangzou yin* 發遣九靈飛步章奏印) (Fig. 24c), worn by a Daoist master on his left arm when submitting the petition to gods at the beginning of a ritual, and the Precious Seal of the Divine Empyrean in Jade Script (*Shanxiao yuwen baoyin* 神霄玉文寶印) (Fig. 24d) made of gold and used in curing

<sup>30</sup> Although I have regrouped at least five seals from Wang Yucheng's fourth type to the third group, the overall percentage remains the same.

<sup>31</sup> Fig. 20a-d are seals nos. 48, 228, 205, and 157 in Wang 2000, 67, 71, 73-74.

all diseases, are embedded with shorter interlocking lines (Li and Lu 2002, 279).<sup>32</sup> The graphs of Fig. 24d highlight short curvy lines ended with a “Y” shape.

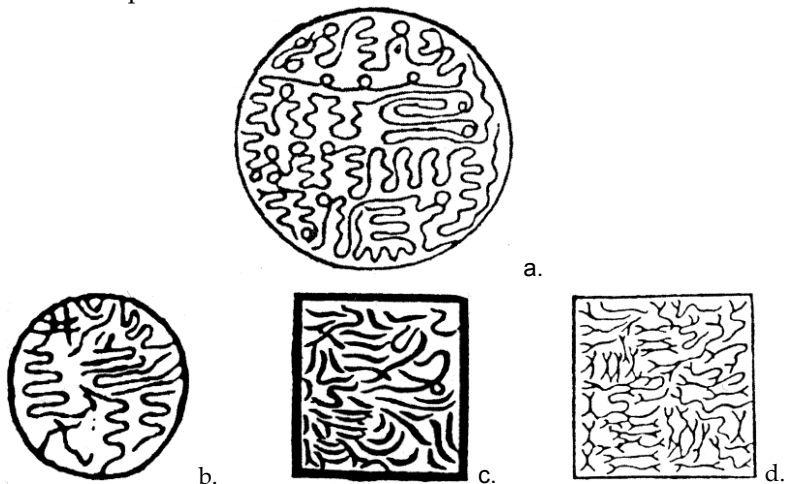


Fig. 24: Graphic seals—a. *Taiji Seal*, *Daofa huiyuan*, DZ 1220, 29: 560; b. Seal of the Lord of the Dao, *Taixuan dusheng xuzhi*, DZ 565, 10: 607; c. Seal for Sending Petitions, *Shangqing lingbao dafa*, DZ 1221, 30: 903; d. Precious Seal of the Divine Empyrean, *Gaoshang shenxiao yuqing zhenwang zishu dafa*, DZ 1219, 28: 617.

These graphic seals resemble the miniature versions of the oft-cited cosmic diagrams (Fig. 25) illustrated in the early 12<sup>th</sup>-century commentary (DZ 147, 3: 64-65; Huang 2012, 93; Despeux 2000, 511-13; Legeza 1975, 32-37) to the *Duren jing* 度人經 (DZ 1). Since the preface is attributed to Emperor Huizong and the main text celebrates the supreme status of the Divine Empyrean school, this text may be associated with the Divine Empyrean Daoists active at Huizong's court. Created by the Sovereign of the Heavenly Perfected (Tianzhen huangren 天真皇人), a deity playing a crucial role as a transmitter of heavenly scriptures in Numinous Treasure Daoism (Hsieh 2007), the diagram is noted for its dynamic graphs that evoke the fluid, tread-like, and uplifting *qi* filling the universe at Daoist creation.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>32</sup> For comparable seals, see Li and Lu 2002, 55, 168, 257-58.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. the Diagram of the Chant of the Azure Sky, and the Diagram of the Great Floating Earth at Dawn from the same text; see Huang 2012, 93-94 (figs 2.5, 2.6); Despeux 2000, 513 (fig. 10).

## 圖之化變 青始寶靈

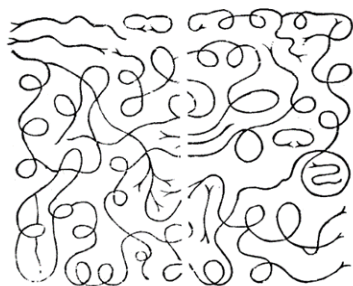


Fig. 25: The Diagram of Blue Original Transformation of Numinous Treasure, *Lingbao wuliang duren shangpin miaojing futu*, DZ 147, 3: 63.

Graphic seals can also embody miniature renditions of ritual space, evident in the following three seals related to the thunder rites and retrieved from the fourteenth-century *Daofa huiyuan* (Fig. 26a-c; DZ 1220, 29: 151, 594).<sup>34</sup> The most complex design among the three, Fig. 26a (Li and Lu 2002, 162) features a mandala-inspired seal template with a wheel motif at the center. Flanking the border of this design are triangles made of lined dots and what look like the Eight Trigrams. Curvilinear patterns ended with a “Y” shape motif fill the rest of the seal surface. The seal evokes the vital military vehicles of the so-called Fire Carriages (*Huoche* 火車), driven by the generals of the celestial Departments of the Five Thunders (*Wulei* 五雷) (Skar 1996, 168), which in turn possess millions of celestial soldiers (*Daofa huiyuan*, DZ 1220, 29: 598-602; Sakai 2012). The wheel with radiant arrows may signal the fire wheel.<sup>35</sup> Pertinent to this is the altar-like diagrammatic design in Fig. 26b that shows the Eight Trigrams at the border, and a character that reads “thunder” (*lei* 雷) flanked by stellar symbols of lined dots referring to the Northern Dipper. An additional talismanic stroke circling partially the “thunder” character and rolling upward to the upper left adds a sense of speedy mobility of the troops.

<sup>34</sup> These correspond to seal nos. 77, 234-2, 235-2 respectively in Wang 2000, 68, 74.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. the Chariot Talisman for Rescuing the Soul (*Duhun chefu* 度魂車符) with a wheel motif in *Lingbao yujian*, DZ 547, 10: 257; Ren 2006, 197.

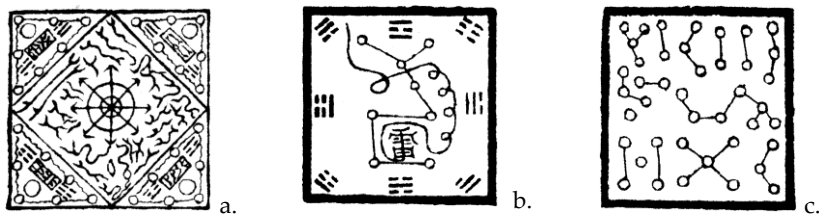


Fig. 26: Graphic seals mimicking diagrams of ritual space and charts of numerology—a. Seal of the Fire Chariots of the Departments of the Five Thunders, *Daofa huiyuan*, DZ 1220, 29: 151; b-c. Two templates for the back side of the Seal of the Thunder Bureau, *Daofa huiyuan*, DZ 1220, 29: 594.

Both Figs. 26a and b resemble ritual charts showing the aerial view of Daoist altars (*tan* 壇 or *daochang* 道場), such as the lamp charts of the Daoist altars with the Eight Trigrams flanking the charts (Fig. 27a-b) illustrated in the thirteenth-to-fourteenth century liturgical manuals (Lowell Skar in Pregadio ed., 2007, 673-74, 679-80). The lined dots in Fig. 27a refer to the arrangement of lamps in the ritual space mimicking the constellations; they compare to the lined dots in the seal template illustrated in Fig. 26c.

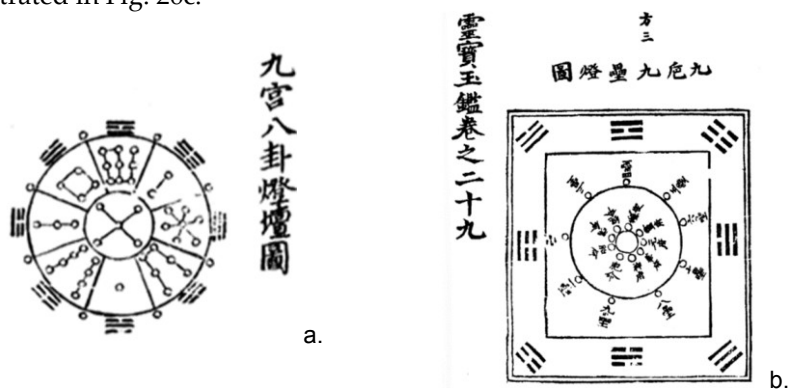


Fig. 27: Daoist ritual diagrams—a. Lamp chart with the Nine Palaces and Eight Trigrams, *Lingbao lingjiao jidu jinshu*, DZ 466, 7: 32; b. Lamp Chart, *Lingbao yujian*, DZ 547, 10: 343.

Both the seal templates in Figs. 26b-c are alternative designs for the back side of the aforementioned Seal of the Thunder Bureau (Fig. 15a). As noted earlier, the seal is supposed to be deployed as a source of light to shine upon and thus exorcise the poisonous dragon. Seen in this way,

it is especially significant that the design in Fig. 26c, reserved for the back side of the seal, is in fact a miniature map of light.

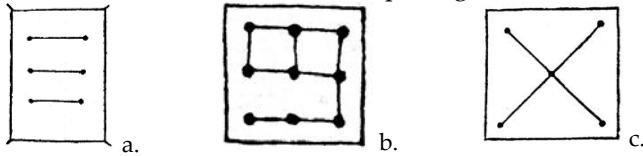


Fig. 28: Graphic seals with numerology designs—a-b. Divine Seal of the Monarch of Heaven, *Fumo shenzhou miaojing*, DZ 1412, 34: 415; *shagui lu*, DZ 1215, 28: 526; c. Seal of the Great General, *Shagui lu*, DZ 1215, 28: 526.

In addition, there are also minimalistic seal designs that feature simple lines and dots (Fig. 28a-c).<sup>36</sup> Figs. 28a-b are both called the Divine Seals of the Monarch of Heaven (*Tiandi shenyin* 天帝神印). The seals subjugate evil spirits, bring auspices (DZ 1412, 34: 415), and grant longevity (DZ 1215, 28: 526). The Seal of the Great General (*Dajiangjun yin* 大將軍印) in Fig. 28c evokes the Emperor of the North in charge of the North Pole. Wearing this seal on the right arm, one will always win in the battlefield and conquer all evils (*Fumo shenzhou miaojing*, DZ 1412, DZ 34: 416).

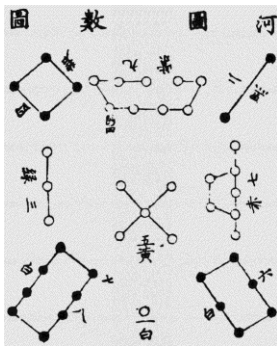


Fig. 29. River Chart from Daozang

It is likely that the Daoists deploying these seals see simple configurations of lined dots like these not as mere decorative graphs but as symbols that resonate with cosmological orders. Pertinent to this is a newly-developed diagrammatical study of divination and numerology, first proposed by the Song Neo-Confucian scholars who studied the Book of Changes and its divinations.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>36</sup> These seals correspond to seals nos. 72, 43, 71 respectively in Wang 2000, 66-67. Cf. Li and Lu 2002, 117-18, 127-28.

<sup>37</sup> I am grateful to Richard Smith for connecting this group of graphic seals to the charts associated with *Yijing* numerology.



The River Chart (*Hetu* 河圖), attributed to Chen Tuan (d. 989) and preserved in the Daoist Canon (Fig. 29; DZ 158, 3: 168), belongs to this category. It aims to reveal, in numerological terms, the "patterns and processes of cosmic change" (Smith 1991, 108; Huang 2012, 96, 98).

## Conclusion

Visual analysis remains an effective tool for modern readers to make sense of the seemingly chaotic array of seal designs preserved in the Daoist Canon. As a first step toward a systematic documentation of the styles of Daoist seals, four types are proposed: seals in seal script, seals in heavenly scripts, talisman-inspired seals, and graphic seals. The four types demonstrate wide-ranging composing principles. Laid out in sequence, these four types also demonstrate a gradual departure from the norm of Chinese seals, moving from a script-based mode to the grey zone of imagetext, and to the graphic. Hybrid imagetext, the esoteric underpinning of the majority of the seal designs examined in this article, speaks volumes about the uniqueness and creativity of Daoist visuality. Other Daoist symbols share these visual idioms that manifest in other formats and materials, such as the myriad forms of heavenly scripts, talismans, and maps of the ritual space.

The study of Daoist seals has stimulated additional questions awaiting future exploration. It is encouraging to go beyond Daoist seals and look harder into the mechanism of Daoist imagetexts and their associated functions. For example, one can take the thunder-inspired visual designs (seal and talisman alike) and materials (thunder-struck wood) alongside rituals inspired by thunder (thunder rites) and examine if there is any mechanism underlining art and religion. Can one speak of a category of Daoist visual and material culture that is exclusively inspired by thunder rituals? Indeed, one can take a similar thematic approach to re-examine other Daoist seals according to their specific functions or their association with specific schools, and compare them with talismans serving the same functions or the same schools. Is there a common visual grammar underlining the visual features of Daoist seals and talismans in service of a common function or within the same school?

Going beyond Daoism, it is equally promising to expand the inquiry to a comparative scale, placing Daoist and Buddhist seals face to face.

After all, the limited Buddhist seals brought to comparison in Part 1 of this study (Huang 2017) reveal only a tiny tip of the Buddho-Daoist iceberg. At first sight, the Buddhist talismanic seals appear “atypical” and “Daoist-inspired” because they lack iconic forms such as a buddha or a bodhissatva that dominates Buddhist art. Alternatively, these aniconic images are created based on a mixture of Chinese writings and graphs, which may indeed reflect an under-stated but fundamental visual expression that shapes the common ground of Chinese religious visual culture.

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